DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 119 318 EA 007 954

AUTHOR Holleman, I. Thomas, Jr.
TITLE Meetings of the School Board.
PUB DATE 75
NOTE 30p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$2.06 Plus Postage
DESCRIPTORS Board Administrator Relationship; *Board of Education Policy; *Board of Education Role; *Boards of Education; Committees; Elementary Secondary Education; *Meetings; Parliamentary Procedures

ABSTRACT

The basic function of any school board meeting is the transaction of the official business of the school district. Policies that direct the daily activities of the school are derived through this transaction process. If an understanding of the intricacies, actions, and interactions of each group that participates either directly or indirectly in a school board meeting can be grasped by all concerned, then a school board can conduct its business with dispatch and provide the decisive leadership that school districts desperately need. This document provides information on the major aspects of board meetings--the purpose of the meeting, preparation of the agenda, time and place of meetings, rules of order for meetings, executive versus open sessions, dealing with petitions and delegations, minutes of meetings, board committees, and the relationship between administrative staff members and the board. (Author/IRT)

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1975

MEETINGS OF THE SCHOOL BOARD

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-by-

I. Thomas Holleman, Jr.

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The basic function of the school board meeting is the transaction of the official business of the school. Any business of the school district which requires board action must come before the board at legal meetings. Neither the school district nor the school board are committed to any decisions or policies except when action has been taken in a meeting as prescribed by law. Even a school board member has no legally constituted authority or capacity in relation to the school district until he is in attendance at a school board meeting.

PURPOSE OF THE MEETINGS

It therefore follows that the primary purpose of a board of education meeting is to discuss and make legal decisions concerning school policy. The proper work of a school board during the course of a meeting can be seen only by examining the total context of the operation of the board. Since the board is the policy making body of the school district it appears that all of its decisions must be policy making decisions. Thus each board meeting must be involved in some aspect of policy making whether that of formulation, approval, re-evaluation, or renovation.

At each board meeting the board must adopt policies which reflect: (1) the purposes of the people for their

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schools and (2) their willingness to spend money to accomplish these purposes. The superintendent makes the rules and administrative decisions needed to carry out the board's policies. The board takes periodic "readings" on the educational process and makes necessary policy adjustments. The superintendent follows suit with rules and administrative decisions. Later, the board takes "readings" on the educational product and makes further adjustments at the policy level. The superintendent again follows suit with rules and administrative decisions. And so the process continues.[1]

At its meetings, then, the board studies process and product reports which were received in advance, considers alternative proposals for policy adjustments, takes new policy positions, and makes any decisions which it is legally required to make in putting its policies into effect.

There are basically three types of decisions that school boards make: (1) housekeeping decisions, which involve the acceptance of reports, formal acknowledgment of correspondence and reports, votes of appreciation and thanks, and the determination of procedures; (2) administrative (terminal action) decisions, which involve the purchasing of school sites, adding to insurance coverage, the borrowing of funds, granting exclusions to the compulsory attendance law, and calling for bids on bonds; and (3) policy decisions, which serve as guidelines to administrative action and which exist as a rule or a law exists in other school contracts.[2]

It may be concluded that there is little limitation

upon the nature of the business that can come before the board at a regular meeting. Generally, the board is permitted by law to establish its own rules, regulations, and policies relative to the conduct of school board meetings. It is most common for a school board to consider matters which are brought to its attention by the superintendent of schools in the form of the meeting agenda or to listen to any particular petitions or requests that are made by patrons of the school district through the superintendent of schools.[3] The only time that a school board meeting is actually restricted to the bounds of only one purpose is found in the case of a special meeting which will be examined later in the paper.

PREPARATION OF THE AGENDA

Effective preparation of the agenda is necessary for insuring the success of a school board meeting. The agenda is a concise and orderly statement of topics or problems to be discussed at the next meeting. It is usually prepared by the superintendent, often with the advice of the board president or one or more of the board members. The superintendent will always have certain items which he feels must be a part of the board's discussions. Board members will have other items in which they have a particular interest. Committees have reports which should be read. Citizen groups and teacher groups may have items which they feel are important in the improvement of education. All such communications should be routed to the office of the superintendent in order

to be included in the agenda of the board.[4]

The superintendent should organize the reports and recommendations and mail them to each board member well in advance of the meeting. This gives each member ample opportunity to review the materials so he can discuss and/or vote intelligently on these issues at the coming meeting. Usually the agenda is closed when it has been placed in the mail. This procedure will greatly speed up the meeting and guarantee that it will discuss something worthwhile.[5]

The American Association of School Administrators gives this advice in regards to the preparation of the agenda:

> It is important that all reports and recommendations to be made to the board be made in writing so that each member may be informed of the issues under consideration. Not only may this save time, but it may also eliminate the possibility of ill-feeling. Even if the board is divided in its reaction to a particular issue, the possibility of any faction indicating that the other members were informed more thoroughly is lessened. This does not preclude the necessity for the superintendent and the school board chairman to meet in advance of the general meeting in order to preview the agenda and to extend their understanding of any controversial issues that may arise. Preplanning helps make for an economical, fruitful meeting and is appreciated by all concerned.[6]

Dr. Henry M. Brickell, Assistant Superintendent of the Manhasset, L. I. schools, makes these suggestions for the preparation and use of the agenda:

1. Never discuss any subject which is not on the printed agenda.

2. Don't listen to written material aloud--this means minutes, correspondence, reports, etc.,--have all of it mailed

in advance.

3. Have the superintendent or the secretary write suggested starting time by each agenda item so that the board can tell whether it is spending the proper time on each item.

4. Abandon the traditional agenda format and substitute one in which all action items are separated from all information items.

5. Place all action items at the top of the agenda and finish every one before moving into the information section.

6. Place all delegations, committees, and individuals on the agenda at the end of the action section--not at the beginning.

7. Allow time for public questions at the close of the meeting--not during the proceedings. (Or, at least fit two or three definite places during the session and limit the people to these).

8. Ask the superintendent to send his written recommendation in advance on every "action" item.

9. Ask the superintendent to express his recommendations in the form of motions, worded as they appear in the official minutes.

10. Ask the superintendent to list briefly the reasonable alternative to his recommendations and to give when possible the pros and cons of each.

11. Ask the superintendent to design standard forms for recommending appointments, acting on bids, approving warrants, admitting non-resident students, and all other

routine actions so that many small decisions can be made in a single motion.[7]

In summary, the agenda should consist of items of business to be brought before the board for consideration and action by the board. They should be classified under the appropriate headings in the adopted order of business. The items should be numbered for convenience in referring to them. The purposes of the agenda are: to expedite procedure and prevent waste of time by furnishing a plan to be followed; to provide for members an opportunity to give reflective thought to the matters scheduled for action; and to prevent the omission of any matters that should receive attention.[8]

Meetings should usually proceed in accordance with the order of items on the agenda, but the board should be free to depart from the order of listing or even to add new items if it sees fit. However, the members should try not to bring up matters at the meeting without warning the others. If that is done, the matters should usually be laid on the table until the next regular meeting and entered as items on the agenda for that meeting. Hasty action, without warning or adequate time for consideration by the members, may lead boards to make unwise decisions that require later revocation of the action taken. This places the board in an embarassing position, particularly if the action has already gone into effect.[9]

TIME AND PLACE OF MEETINGS

The place, date, and time of school board meetings should be generally known and should be announced in the rules and regulations. On the average, school boards have one regular meeting each month. However, special problems such as building construction and budget approval may require extra meetings.[10]

According to a survey by Dr. Charles Everand Reeves, meetings are held in the evenings by 82 percent of school boards, in the afternoons by 10 percent, in the mornings by 6 percent, and in the middle of the day by 2 percent. Evening meetings are usually preferred because they are less likely to interfere with the private business and professional obligations of members. Noon meetings are not satisfactory because they do not provide sufficient time for deliberation. At that time members are anxious to return to their work and may tend to conduct the board's business in a perfunctory manner.[11]

Board meetings should open as early in the evening as it is possible for the members to be present. Many boards meet at 7:30 P. M. They should be called to order promptly at the time set if there is a quorum. Members should be urged to appear on time, and the hour of the meeting should be changed if members persist in being late.[12]

In some industrial areas daytime meetings may be preferable because a large percentage of the population may

be employed during the evening hours and some individuals may be denied access as a result of conflict with their working hours.[13]

Goldhammer points out that research in group dynamics indicates that a school board probably becomes less efficient and increasingly less able to make decisions as the meeting is prolonged. Few, if any, meetings should last more than three hours, and it is undoubtedly true that the efficiency of the group tends to decrease after two hours of meeting time.[14]

Every school district large enough to be an administrative unit should maintain a board room for the holding of meetings. Preferably the room should adjoin the office of the superintendent of schools where the administrative files will be available if letters, reports of studies, or other materials should be needed unexpectedly. The board room should be fitted with a large table and comfortable chairs for all board members and the superintendent. There should be chairs for delegates, petitioners, and visitors.[15]

It is not uncommon in smaller school districts for the board to sit around a table in the principal's office or in the school library, with relatively little space allocated for the spectators.[16] Many authorities consider it unwise for the setting of the board to be too informal, since the board is conducting the public's business which involves concern for the children of the community and the expenditure of large amounts of money.[17]

There should be a map of the school district on the

wall showing the locations of buildings and attendance district lines. Spot maps showing the distribution of high school, elementary, and preschool children by place of residence will be useful. Charts showing pupil enrollments and enrollment trends, expenditures and their trends, and other factual material should be available. There should be a library shelf of books and magazines dealing with school control and management in the board room.[18]

Some of the modern board rooms are designed to communicate the great variety of educational activities taking place in the school district at a given time. For example, the walls of the room can be covered with cork which provides ample space for display of educational exhibits. Or several bulletin boards may be used, each decorated by a different school. Many times students can plan and prepare the exhibits for the board meetings. Other examples of interesting displays are arrangements of the textbooks used in the school district from kindergarten to the twelfth grade, social studies exhibits of student's written projects, stagecraft, ceramic displays, or perhaps an interesting biological exhibit.[19]

However, as a departure from what has been mentioned, Edward Mowbray Tuttle, First Executive Secretary of the National School Boards Association, Inc., suggests that board meetings "be held at different schools in the system so that the members may become better acquainted with the work of all the schools."[20] In addition, it is not at all uncommon for a school board to meet for a dinner and informal discussion

of problems to be considered later in open meeting. The reasons for the practice are said to be to save time, to shorten regular meetings, and to make it possible to begin meetings earlier and without the necessity of waiting for stragglers. Many times the board can be served by the home economics class. If the board dines at a club or hotel, the members should pay the tab, not the school system.[21]

RULES OF ORDER FOR MEETINGS

The business of a school board should be conducted in accordance with generally accepted principles of parliamentary procedure. If there are any laws applicable to school board procedure, they must be observed. Any applicable rules of the board must then have precedence. After these, authoritative principles of parliamentary procedure should be followed. As a means to this end, the board should adopt a standard manual as a guide. Two of these are Robert's Rules of Order, Revised, and Cushing's Manual of Parliamentary Procedure.[22]

The adoption of formal parliamentary procedure has been known to reduce the length of board meetings by as much as a third, largely by the elimination of unnecessary and often unrelated conversation. Meetings should be orderly and formal but not so formal that it is difficult for a member to express his opinions freely.[23]

The correct procedure for making a motion is not hard to learn. Motions should be made, seconded, and repeated by the chairman or read by the secretary before being opened for

discussion, and opportunity should be offered for discussion before a motion is put to a vote. A member should be permitted to withdraw his motion with the consent of the person who seconded it before discussion has commenced, but, after discussion has started, he is not permitted to withdraw his motion except with the unanimous consent of the members. If a motion is lost, it cannot properly be reconsidered at the same meeting without the consent of a majority of the members present. After a decision has been made, the question is closed to further discussion at the same meeting unless it is reopened by board action. A motion for reconsideration can be made and seconded only by a member who voted with the majority on the original motion. Amendments to a motion or to previous amendments must be disposed of before a vote can be taken on the original motion as amended. Once before the board, a motion can be interrupted by a motion to lay it on the table, to act on the previous question, for postponement, for amendment, or to adjourn.[24]

Board members often violate correct parliamentary procedure in various ways. Members should address the chair and be recognized by it before making a motion or speaking on a question before the body. Recognition by the chair is not required for seconding a motion. Sometimes motions are made, seconded, and voted upon when they are out of order due to the priority of a previous motion upon which action has not been taken. In some cases, motions are made and discussed and put to a vote without a second, but if a motion is not

seconded it should be declared dead. An amendment is sometimes passed and the original motion as amended is not put to a vote. This makes the amendment invalid because the motion of which it has become a part was not passed. Sometimes important actions are announced as having been adopted by consent or agreement. All important business should be adopted by vote of the board or its legality may be in doubt, though matters of procedure may be settled by consent. Sometimes the chairman fails to announce the result of a vote taken on a motion. These are good examples of faulty procedure.[25]

A well-conducted school board meeting will proceed smoothly, with a minimum of loss of time, according to a plan, and according to rules of parliamentary procedure. There will be discussion on each question by every member desiring the floor, limited by the board if deemed necessary but adequate to present the various views on the issues raised. The vote of the board will represent the members' independent opinions and not the dominance of any one member. Discussion will concern the question and not irrelevant matters. Such conduct during a meeting depends heavily upon the ability of the president of the board.[26]

The Texas Association of School Boards' Handbook gives this example of the order of business:

1. Call to order
2. Roll call
3. Establishment of a quorum.
4. Reading and approval of minutes of previous meeting. The minutes may be approved without

reading if all members have been given an opportunity to read the minutes prior to the present meeting. Changes in, or additions to, the minutes should be made before the vote to approve the minutes

5. Communications to and from the board
6. Hearing of delegations
7. Regular report of the superintendent
8. Unfinished business
9. New business
10. Miscellaneous
11. Adjournment [27]

EXECUTIVE VERSUS OPEN SESSIONS

It is a fairly common practice for school boards to have executive sessions prior to regular meetings in order to discuss critical problems and to come to some agreements prior to the open board meeting. The belief that all school business should be conducted in open meetings is probably fully justified because it is the public's business in a democratic society. However, to open all meetings to the public sometimes may be embarrassing to the board, harmful to employees or pupils, and costly to the school district. Such may be the result when personal matters relating to some member of the administrative or teaching staff or other employee require consideration by the board or when it becomes necessary for a board to adopt policies relating to pupil conduct and discipline in the wake of some case of misconduct. In the matter such as the purchase of a school site it is sometimes to the financial interest of the school district to keep the board's intention from being made public until the action has been consummated by someone for the board. This may make purchase

of the desired site at its fair value possible. In summation, it can be said that except when the nature of the business or the interests of the public require that discussion and action be secret, the whole procedure should always be conducted in open meetings.[28]

Tuttle had this advice to give concerning executive sessions:

> The effective school board is one which rarely goes into executive session, which holds open meetings at convenient times and places announced well in advance, and which invites and encourages the attendance of individuals and representatives of community organizations who are sincerely interested in the advancement of public education.[29]

DEALING WITH PETITIONS AND DELEGATIONS

Petitions should be read in board meetings, and all requests made by delegations or individuals should be heard respectfully and with courtesy by the board in session. It

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Note: Acts of the 61 st Texas Legislature amended a previous Act of the 60 th Legislature, Regular Session, page 597, prohibits governmental bodies from holding meetings which are closed to the public calling, aiding in the calling or organizing any special or called meeting closed to the public or closing a regular meeting to the public, is made a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of not less than $25.00 nor more than $200.00 for the first offense and a larger penalty on any subsequent offense, excepting various meetings, such as personnel discussions, etc. The penal provisions of the statute are not made applicable to the giving of the notice, but Section 3 of the Act authorizes any "interested person" to bring an action of mandamus or injunction for the purpose of stopping or preventing violations or threatened violations of the Act by governmental bodies. There is nothing in the Act which would indicate that failure to give the required notice would affect the validity or the legality of the meeting. (Ruling by the Waller, Texas Independent School District's attorney.)

may be advisable to limit the time allowed for the presentation of the request. In addition, presentation in writing should be required in order to avoid misunderstanding. The actions requested should be given consideration by the members in session, but the board should not be rushed into action and should seldom or never deliberate or act at the meeting at which the matter is proposed. The board should seldom or never commit itself while the delegation or petitioners are present or before time has been allowed to give full consideration to the matter because of the possibility that their presence may influence the decision. The matter should be left for discussion and action at the next or some subsequent meeting. This should be done even if the request is made by a parent-teacher association, by teachers, or by pupils.[30]

The board should be free to reject requests made by groups of the public if they seem unworthy of adoption. They may represent a minority of the people and in no sense the will of the community. If the board desires to learn the opinions held in the community, it can hold a public hearing or a referendum or call a mass meeting, but the board should act in accordance with the best judgment of a majority of its members after due consideration. Whatever action is taken, the secretary should acknowledge receipt of the petition if it is not formally presented by someone and should keep the petitioners informed as to action of the board on request. If the petition is denied, the reasons for denial should be stated.[31]

Complaints and criticisms from individuals or groups are major "occupational hazards" of both the board member and the administrator. The procedure for handling complaints and criticisms should appear in a board's written policies. Whether or not this procedure is in writing, it should be standardized.[32]

While a suitable procedure for the presentation of complaints will probably vary with the size and organization of the school system, one procedure for handling complaints is as follows:

1. The complainant first presents his complaint to the superintendent who investigates and reports his findings to the board and to the complainant.

2. If the complainant then wishes to present his case to the board, he is invited to do so at the next meeting.

3. The board hears the complaint, considers any additional information gathered by the superintendent or staff, and makes the best possible decision. At no time should a board member forget that, as an individual, he has no authority, to act or to promise board action on a complaint. However, a well-informed board member can often avert or answer unjust criticisms or complaints.[33]

MINUTES OF MEETINGS

The law requires that an official set of minutes be kept to record all the transactions of the school district. In no case does the law specify the detail with which the

minutes must be kept, and practices vary to some extent.[34]

The minutes of the school board meetings are very important for several reasons:

1. They furnish a history of the school district and of local school board policies and administration.

2. The minutes are important because they are a record of all the decisions and actions of the school board in the past.

3. Complete records of the transactions of the school board are important because the minutes are a legal record of the activities of the school board as a public corporation having the specified legal purpose of maintaining public schools. The minutes are the only record of board action that exists.[35]

The minutes should be complete and accurate. They should be so prepared as to be models for minutes in the future and in such a manner that the board members of the future will be proud of them when they refer to them or when they are submitted to a court as a source of evidence.

The minute book should be a looseleaf book of convenient size with heavy, stiff covers. Books and paper fillers, such as 8½ inches by 11 or 14 inches, are prepared by supply companies for use by school boards. Many ledgers can actually be locked by a built-in lock in the cover.

It is convenient to have pages printed or mimeographed as blank forms to be filled with regular and recurring preliminary data. Two hundred such pages would be enough for as many

meetings and should serve for several years. One sheet would be used for each meeting, and unprinted sheets of the same kind of paper should be used if additional sheets are needed.

The minutes should record the manner of disposing of each motion before another motion is made and recorded. This does not apply to motions pertaining to the motion before the house, such as motions to amend, substitute, or lay on the table. Any unrelated motion is out of order when a motion is before the house. If the presiding officer does not remember that a motion is before the house, it is the duty of the secretary to inform him that such is the case.

The words "Passed" or "Carried" following the statement of a motion in the minutes are not sufficient except for a motion to adjourn or motions considered to be of minor importance. On important business motions the notation should be "Carried unanimously," if such is the case, and if the vote is divided and there is a poll of the members, the votes of the several members should be recorded.

Each separate action should be recorded in the minutes in one or more separate paragraphs.

All the board's resolutions, awards of contracts, approval of executive actions, and other actions should be numbered consecutively in chronological order of occurrence.

Marginal notations or briefs subject titles should be used to indicate the location of the more important items. They will be useful in searching for specific actions.

For communications and other documents that are too

long and bulky to be included in the minutes and still need to be preserved, it is suggested that references to the file and document numbers be made at the appropriate place in the minutes, so that the originals can be readily located. The documents should be filed not left loose in the minute book or pasted in it.

The stenographic notes from which the minutes are prepared should be preserved for a limited time. A year or two should be sufficient.

The minutes should usually include the following:

1. Date.

2. Name of the board.

3. Statement that a meeting was called to order, by whom, the hour, and whether the meeting was a regular, organization, adjourned or reconvened, or special meeting, and, if a special meeting, state its purpose.

4. Record of attendance and absence of members and a statement that a quorum was declared by the chairman.

5. Statement of action taken for approval of the minutes of the last regular and any special or other meetings that have been held since the last regular meeting.

6. Notation of the presentation and hearing of delegates or visitors who have oral communications or petitions to present and of any actions referring matters presented to special or regular committees or the superintendent for report, if such is done.

7. Statement of written communications and petitions

read, such as those from churches, service clubs, parent-teacher groups, teacher organizations, pupil groups, or individuals, and a record of action on matters presented, when required.

8. Record of hearings and action on reports of special committees, any regular committees, and members of the board.

9. Record of hearings and actions on previously requested special reports from administrative officers such as the business manager, the architect, the athletic director, or the school nurse. If written, the reports may be numbered and filed as documents and reference made to them in the minutes by file and document number.

10. Record of the presentation of and action on reports of the superintendent.

11. Record of hearings and actions on resolutions introduced by various members of the board.

12. Record of motions and actions on unfinished business taken from the table by the board.

13. Record of motions and actions on matters of new business.

14. Record of the motion to adjourn.

The minutes should be typed with duplicate copies, or otherwise duplicated, so that there will be copies for all board members. The typing of the sheets for the official minutes should be done after correction and approval of the minutes by the board, or the original and carbon copies will

serve if there are no corrections.

The records of discussions do not necessarily need to be included in the minutes. Some boards keep these in bound, dated copies as documents to accompany the minutes. They are typed and preserved for reference use and are not official minutes.

The oral reading of the minutes of a previous meeting is a slow, tedious process and a waste of time that is available for board meetings. Instead of oral reading of the minutes of the preceding regular and any interim special meetings, the secretary of the board should mail a copy of the minutes as drafted to each member of the board soon after the meeting. Thus, the members will have an opportunity to read the draft carefully while the meeting is still fresh in their minds and to consider whether or not the minutes as drafted are complete and accurate. If each member has a copy of the minutes as drafted, there will be no need for oral reading.

Minutes may be indexed either on separate pages that can be bound with them or in a card file. In either case, the items listed should be in alphabetical order. Use of the card index system has an advantage over the use of bound pages because a card for each new item can be inserted in its appropriate place without disturbing the alphabetical arrangement of the items. If the index is kept on pages of the minute book, the insertion of new items may require extensive alterations and the re-typing of the page or of the whole index.

The board's official copy of the minutes, signed by the chairman as approved, should be kept by the superintendent in a fireproof vault adjoining the board room or the superintendent's office. Documents that belong to or with the minutes should be kept in the same vault. This also applies to old minutes as long as they may be needed for reference. Even after they are not needed for reference, they should be preserved through the years.[36]

COMMITTEES OF THE BOARD

School boards have used two types of committees--standing committees and special committees.

Standing committees were used by school boards before there were school superintendents. Their purpose was mainly to divide the administrative duties among the members of the board because of the amount of such work involved. Committees produced the curriculum, selected textbooks and library books, examined and employed teachers, purchased supplies, visited classrooms, and performed other administrative and supervisory functions. The standing committee system persisted and seemed to be necessary in city school districts when they were consolidated. The number of board members increased to the point where the boards were so unwieldy that their functions could be better performed by committees. However, the committee system developed to a point at which the board had few functions remaining other than to approve the actions of a ridiculously large number of committees.[37]

During the present century, with the decline in the number of school board members and the wide use of the office of the superintendent, most authorities have reached the conclusion that administrative concerns should be left to the superintendent, because standing committees actually interfere with the proper role of the school board and the superintendent, thus creating friction between the two. There is little need for standing committees if the board confines its time and efforts to its delegated task of general policy-making and evaluation. It is further conceded that board members can maintain a more balanced view of the entire school program when they do not have special responsibilities for only one aspect of the school system's operations. Most board members and school administrators do not favor the use of standing committees, and almost three-fourths of the nation's schools operate without them.[38]

Probably the most current standing committee is that on finance. In fact, it is the only standing committee some boards have. Other frequently retained standing committees are an executive committee and those on rules and regulations, teachers, and school buildings and grounds. Some other standing committees still to be found are those on such matters as legislation; complaints and appeals; public relations; publications; subdistricts; audits; salaries; school supplies; equipment; repairs; community use of buildings; custodial service; insurance; library; designated special subjects; athletics; curriculum and instruction; textbooks; cafeterias;

transportation of pupils; school activities; and health and medical service.[39]

In conclusion, it can be said that the school board should not be an administrative agency. It is legally responsible for the execution of its policies, but the enforcement of policies and administration should be under the direction of the superintendent. It is impractical for a board to administer the schools because it can act only when in session. For the same reason, neither can standing committees successfully administer the schools. The board's functions of determining policies, authorizing procedures, and adopting or rejecting recommendations of the superintendent cannot be performed by committees. There simply are no distinct functions for committees to perform. Lacking real function, committees are sometimes tempted to assume either the board's legislative functions or the superintendent's executive functions to justify their existence.

As a rule, teachers, principals, and other employees should bring matters to the attention of the board only by way of the superintendent (this formality is gradually being questioned as school districts adopt professional consultation). The line of responsibility from teacher or custodian to principal, to superintendent, to school board, and the reverse for the line of authority, should usually be observed for official matters. It is only by maintaining the line of authority and responsibility that the superintendent can be held responsible by the board for the administration of the

school system, and he, in turn, can hold his assistants responsible for the administration of the duties assigned to each of them. The board should refuse to deal directly with teachers and other employees except in cases of formal appeal to the board over the decision of the superintendent. Appeals on trivial matters should be discouraged, and the board should be certain the superintendent is in the wrong before reversing his decision.[40]

On the other hand, some school boards make wise use of staff members in meetings. School boards usually spend more time on financial and property matters than on other phases of the school system's operations. To offset this tendency, school boards may have the superintendent bring one or more members of the administrative or teaching staffs to report on topics related to the curriculum, teaching procedures, school libraries, and other aspects of the educational program. Many boards now schedule special meetings at which their only business is receiving and discussing staff reports.[41]

RELATIONSHIP OF OTHER STAFF MEMBERS TO THE BOARD

School board members generally consider themselves supervisors of the professional personnel, holding them accountable for the proper performance of their responsibilities. In view of the fact that board members lack the technical knowledge necessary to evaluate professional growth adequately, they tend more closely to scrutinize the degree

to which the professional activity conforms to community expectations. The only representative of the professional staff with whom the board members are generally in close contact, however, is the superintendent of schools. Board members have to rely upon him for most of the information that they need about the schools and usually they ask for his recommendation upon most issues prior to their making decisions. Consequently, he is in a relationship to the members of the board different from that of all the other professional employees of the school.[42]

The adopted policies of the board largely determine the conditions of employment of teachers and other employees. The policies include such things as determination of work loads, the salary schedule, provisions for sick leave, furnishing of duplicating machines in each school, and others.

In sum, the basic function of any school board meeting is the transaction of the official business of the school district. In turn, policies are derived through this transaction process which direct the daily activities of the school. If an understanding of the intricacies, actions and interactions of each group which participates either directly or indirectly in a school board meeting can be grasped by all concerned, then in a proper perspective and framework a school board can conduct its business with dispatch and provide the decisive leadership which school districts desperately need.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Henry M. Brickell, "Improving a School Board Meeting," Catholic School Journal, LXIV (April, 1969), 56.

[2]Keith Goldhammer, The School Board, (New York: The Center for Applied Research in Education, Inc., 1964), p. 77.

[3]Ibid., pp. 71-72.

[4]Robert H. Johnson and William Hartman, The School Board and Public Relations (New York: Exposition Press, 1964), pp. 104-105.

[5]Brickell, op. cit.

[6]American Association of School Administrators, School Board--Superintendent Relationships, Thirty-fourth Yearbook (Washington, D. C.: American Association of School Administrators, 1950), pp. 101-104.

[7]Brickell, op. cit.

[8]Charles Everand Reeves, School Boards: Their Status and Activities (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1954), p. 199.

[9]Ibid., pp. 200-201.

[10]A Texas Committee of Ten Project, Handbook for Texas School Board Members (Austin: Texas Association of School Boards, 1968), p. 4.

[11]Reeves, op. cit., p. 195.

[12]Ibid.

[13]Goldhammer, op. cit., p. 74.

[14]Ibid.

[15]Reeves, op. cit., p. 194.

[16]Goldhammer, op. cit.

[17]Ibid.

[18]Ibid., p. 195.

[19]Ralph Langley, "Let Your Board Room Tell the Story," American School Board Journal, CXVL (September, 1962), 14.

[20]Edward Mowbray Tuttle, School Board Leadership in America (Chicago: The Interstate Printers and Publishers, 1958), p. 65.

[21]Reeves, op. cit.

[22]Ibid., p. 201.

[23]Ibid., pp. 201-202.

[24]Ibid.

[25]Ibid.

[26]Ibid.

[27]A Texas Committee of Ten Project, op. cit., p. 5.

[28]Goldhammer, op. cit., pp. 75-76.

[29]Tuttle, op. cit., p. 32.

[30]Reeves, op. cit., p. 213.

[31]Ibid.

[32]A Texas Committee of Ten Project, op. cit., p. 8.

[33]Ibid.

[34]Goldhammer, op. cit., p. 73.

[35]Reeves, op. cit., pp. 216-217.

[36]Ibid., pp. 218-232.

[37]Ibid., p. 120.

[38]A Texas Committee of Ten Project, op. cit., p. 6.

[39]Reeves, op. cit., p. 121.

[40]Ibid., p. 276.

[41]A Texas Committee of Ten Project, op. cit.

[42]Goldhammer, op. cit., p. 39.

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